Fan Fiction and the Author in the Early Seventeenth Century: the Case of Sidney's Arcadia

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Fan fiction and the author in the early 17th century: The case of Sidney's *Arcadia*

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[0.1] *Abstract*—An analysis of the body of supplements and continuations written during the first half of the 17th century around Sir Philip Sidney's romance, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia,* may usefully be approached as a precedent for fan fiction practice. The incomplete nature of the *Arcadia* as published left a number of textual gaps that were filled by later writers, with many of their works coming to be included within subsequent reissues of the *Arcadia* itself. The texts discussed include William Alexander and James Johnstoun's supplements to book 3, Richard Belling's *Sixth Booke,* Anna Weamys's *Continuation,* Gervase Markham's *English Arcadia,* and an anonymous *Historie of Arcadia* in manuscript. Like contemporary fan fiction, these works adopt Sidney's characters and setting in order to fill apparent gaps, propel the story toward a happy ending, or recast it in an altogether different mold. Moreover, the paratextual materials surrounding these texts—including prefaces, dedications, and commendatory poems—provide important evidence about early modern conceptions of authorship, originality, and literary property.

[0.2] *Keywords*—Authorship; *Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia;* Paratext; Philip Sidney

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1. The "perfect-unperfect" *Arcadia*

[1.1] Fan fiction has many origin stories, be it *Star Trek* in the 1960s, Sherlock Holmes in the 1890s, or Virgil continuing Homer's story in the *Aeneid.* As with any idea or movement, a precise genesis is difficult to determine. I propose an alternative originary moment at the turn of the 17th century, after the death of Sir Philip Sidney and the subsequent publication of his work. Although much bibliographic and critical work has been done on Sidney's *Arcadia* and (to a significantly lesser extent) its continuations, these texts have not previously been approached from the perspective of fan studies (note 1). However, they both anticipate current practice and

constitute an important moment in the history of fan fiction, while their framing gives a factual basis for common generalizations about historical conceptions of literary property. Like contemporary fan fiction, the *Arcadia* supplements and continuations adopt Sidney's characters and setting in order to fill apparent gaps, propel the story toward a happy ending, and recast it in a different mold. Moreover, the paratextual materials surrounding these texts (including prefaces, dedications, and commendatory poems) furnish evidence for the ways in which early modern writers and readers approached the subject of continuing another's work.

[1.2] The early modern period makes for a useful starting point for many reasons. The rise of print technology not only led to different ways of engaging with the written word, but also resulted in a growing literary marketplace, in which money could be made from books and the author's name increasingly served as a sign of differentiation and value (Shakespeare's *King Lear,* not the anonymous *King Leir*). The first British copyright act would not be passed until 1710, and it took many more years and test cases before it had much to say about transformative work, rather than exact textual reproduction. Yet even in the absence of legal controls, there was a long-standing cultural debate over the value of derivative writing and authors' more intangible rights. The terms used in this debate were often unstable and contradictory, with the same writers decrying plagiaristic theft in others while defending their own noble practice of imitation. However, such disputes show our current ideas about literary property—unstable and contradictory as these remain—in the process of formation.

[1.3] At the same time, prose fiction was emerging as a major narrative genre. In many ways, the romances of the 16th and 17th centuries were as conductive to fan fiction as their descendants in modern science fiction and fantasy: they were long, sprawling works with a wide geographical reach and large casts of characters, all of whom were liable to fall in and out of love, undertake quests, become enchanted, and have children who might grow up to have adventures of their own. Patricia Parker characterizes the genre as an "inescapable" one that "both projects and postpones or wanders from a projected ending" with proliferating narratives (1979, 13)—much like current serial television (note 2). Such open-ended texts were thus particularly welcoming to readers' interventions and continuations.

[1.4] Philip Sidney's *Arcadia,* moreover, was a special case. Although it became one of the most popular English romances, the text as published

was unfinished. Sidney had originally written a complete version of the story in five parts, now called the *Old Arcadia,* which circulated in manuscript only and was not rediscovered until the 20th century. However, he then began to rewrite the text, greatly expanding it from a straightforward romantic comedy to an epic full of interpolated flashbacks, civil war, and captivity, which made it difficult to see how Sidney might reconcile this narrative to the happy pastoral conclusion of the *Old Arcadia.* At the time of Sidney's sudden death in 1586, the revised *New Arcadia*—already longer than the entirety of the old version despite being incomplete—had reached the middle of book 3 before breaking off in the midst of a decisive battle, and in the middle of a sentence. Sidney was thus an author always already dead, transformed by that death from an undistinguished courtier into a much-celebrated hero and poet. His literary reputation was stewarded by those closest to him, including his friend, Fulke Greville, and his sister, Mary, the Countess of Pembroke, to whom the romance was dedicated. Its full title was *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia,* and in many ways she took over ownership of the work (note 3).

[1.5] In 1590, the *New Arcadia* appeared in quarto, edited by Greville and his associates. This text abruptly breaks off at the end of Sidney's revised manuscript, with the words "Whereat ashamed, (as hauing never done so much before in his life)" (1590, fol. 360v). Three years later, however, another version of the *Arcadia* ("Now since the first edition augmented and ended") was published in the larger folio format, edited by the Countess of Pembroke herself. As a preface by her secretary, Hugh Sanford, states, the countess was "moued" by the textual errors that "disfigured" the quarto edition to correct it, "But as often in repairing a ruinous house, the mending of some olde part occasioneth the making of some new: so here her honourable labour begonne in correcting the faults, ended in supplying the defectes; by the view of what was ill done guided to the consideration of what was not done" (1593, sig. ¶4r). What Mary Sidney did was attach the last three books of the *Old Arcadia* to the *New,* providing an ending for the story. These *Old Arcadia* books were only lightly edited to remove obvious contradictions, with a note marking the gap: "How this combate ended, how the Ladies by the comming of the discouered forces were deliuered, and restored to *Basilius*…is altogether vnknowne. What afterward chaunced, out of the Authors owne writings and conceits hath bene supplied, as foloweth" (1593, Ff3r). The break is portrayed as the result of missing material that in some way took place but then vanished into the absence of Sidney's death, rather than the joining of two very different versions of the story. Still, the disjuncture between the battle-filled captivity episode and the pastoral

conclusion remains apparent; it is not just a matter of rearranging the characters into position.

[1.6] John Florio called this composite edition "that perfect-vnperfect *Arcadia,* which all our world yet weepes…[that Sidney] lived not to mend or end it: since this end wee see of it; though at first above all, now is not answerable to the precedents" (1603, R3r). However, Mary Sidney clearly considered this the best and most complete reflection of her brother's intentions. From 1598, the volume of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* grew to become a collection of Sidney's literary works in various genres; Sidney was the organizing principle of the *Arcadia,* which was to contain all that he had written and no more. Thus, the authorial nature of the *Old Arcadia* ending is what makes it canonical, abrupt though the break may be. As Sanford writes in the preface:

> [1.7] Though [readers] finde not here what might be expected, they may finde neuerthelesse as much as was intended, the conclusion, not the perfection of Arcadia: and that no further than the Authours own writings, or knowen determinations could direct… I dare affirme…that Sir Philip Sidneis writings can no more be perfected without Sir Philip Sidney, then Apelles pictures without Apelles. (1593, ¶4r)

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2. Bridging the gap

[2.1] Yet while Sanford describes the gap in book 3 as fundamentally unfillable, at least two of its readers thought that something might be done about it, even in the absence of Sidney. The Scottish dramatist Sir William Alexander composed a "Supplement," which was first printed as an insert around 1616 and included within the *Arcadia* from the 1621 edition onward (note 4). Another appeared in the 1638 *Arcadia,* advertised as containing "a twofold supplement of a defect in the third Book: the one by Sr. *W. A.* Knight; the other, by Mr. *Ja. Johnstoun* Scoto-Brit. dedicated to K. *James,* and now annexed to this work, for the Readers benefit" (note 5).

[2.2] Johnstoun's dedication introduces many of the issues faced by the Sidney continuators, in a way highlighted by slippages in his syntax. Johnstoun begins as a reader of the *Arcadia* and ends up transformed by it:

> [2.3] Having, Sir, at some idle houres oft and oft evolved the worke of Sir *Philip Sidney,* intituled his *Arcadia,* I was carried with such pleasure in perusing the same, that I could never find an end

> of reading: while at length my braine transported with the Idea's of his conceit, brought forth a little complement, of what was rather desired than wanting in him…True it is, that whatsoever is wanting in him, can no more be filled up but by himselfe, than one man can invest anothers mind: yet I have assayed to play the Ape, albeit I cannot represent the author. (1638, aa1r)

[2.4] As Gavin Alexander notes, Johnstoun translates the revised text's incompletion "into a matter of readerly practice" (2006, 274)—the unfinished status of the work is replaced by the endless pleasure of reading it, and Johnstoun is so possessed that his text is almost inevitably "brought forth." Like Sanford, Johnstoun stresses a distinction between what is "desired" and "wanting" in the *Arcadia* even as he shifts from one word to the other. This allows him to speak of a lack in the text without impugning the "perfection" of what is there. The task of imitating the *Arcadia* is thus recast as the aping representation of Sidney himself, even though "invest[ing] anothers mind" remains impossible. Using the dedication to seek preferment, Johnstoun emphasizes the display of his own "travell and diligence herein." Although Sidney provides him with material, the very limits of the task make it more difficult:

> [2.5] I am sure otherwise to have a warrant in his owne writings for my invention. The language, so far as I could, I have borrowed from himselfe; and if I be more compendious [i.e., brief] herein, than need were, I am bound within the limits of his owne conceits, which I durst not exceed. (1638, aa1v)

[2.6] William Alexander uses similar terms to describe the other bridging passage. In a note at the end of his supplement, Alexander writes, "If this little Essay have not that perfection which is required for supplying the want in that place for which it was intended, yet shall it serve as shadow to give luster to the rest" (1621, Ff5v). Looking back some years later, he further explains his ambitions:

> [2.7] And though being there but an Imitator, I could not really give the Principall it self, but only as it were the Pourtrait, and that done by too gross a Pencil, *Non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum.* It were enough to be excellent by being Second to *Sidney,* since who ever could be that, behoved to be before others. (Garrett 1996, 199)

[2.8] Alexander links mimesis, the imitation of nature, with artistic

imitation: Sidney's Arcadia becomes the reality that he depicts, the original of which his text is a copy. If he can "give luster" to Sidney, then Sidney also gives luster to him: by imitating Sidney, he is effectively jumping the queue of the writers who follow him, inviting comparisons with no one else. Writing such a supplement therefore becomes a legitimate means of displaying one's creative abilities.

[2.9] Alexander and Johnstoun find similar strategies of concluding the battle of the *New Arcadia* and returning the characters to their *Old Arcadia* positions, and each does so as "compendious[ly]" as possible. Both supplements take up the story, as Alexander later wrote, "beginning at the very half Sentence, where he left with the Combat betwixt *Zelmane* and *Anaxius,* and continuing till the Ladies were returned to their Father" (Garrett 1996, 199). In that sentence, Anaxius steps back under Zelmane's onslaught, "Whereat ashamed, as having never done so much before in his life…" In both supplements, Anaxius is about to redouble his blows when he is "suddenly arrested" by the sound of approaching rescue (1621, Ee2r; 1638, aa2r). As Gavin Alexander argues, the interrupted fight mirrors the interrupted nature of Sidney's text, making the break appear deliberate (2006, 43). By immediately ending the confrontation between Anaxius and Zelmane and moving on to the final battle begun by the arrival of Musidorus, both supplement writers signal the terms of their engagement: they turn the half-sentence into a herald of conclusion, beginning the movement toward the final books.

[2.10] Both Alexander and Johnstoun also choose to honor the author himself through the figure of Philisides, a minor character who serves as Sidney's avatar in the *Arcadia.* In the *Old Arcadia,* he is only one of the shepherds appearing in the poetic eclogues, but the revised edition expands his role into that of a shepherd-knight, with the first mention of his name set in italic capital letters for emphasis. Alexander and Johnstoun both bring Philisides on stage for the climactic rescue, as one of the two mysterious knights accompanying Musidorus. Attempting to define what is "wanting" in the *Arcadia,* Johnstoun concludes: "There is nothing missing but himself; and yet his person is so well represented in his worke, that if he any wayes could be absented from the assertion of the Ladies liberty, it was needfull, because he left in the midst; that by that want his want should be livelier deciphered" (1638, aa1r). Sidney's work on the *Arcadia* is recast as a chivalrous quest to free the heroines, from which he could only have been "absented" by death.

[2.11] Thus, in matching up their depiction to reality, both Alexander and Johnstoun must go on to kill him off (note 6). In both cases, death results from a wound to the thigh, where Sidney himself was shot at the battle of Zutphen. Alexander writes, "Suddenly a Dart (none knew to whose hand the honour of it was due) did wound him in the thigh" (1621, Ee2v). Though less anachronistic than a musket, the source of this dart in the middle of a sword fight remains mysterious, almost as though it comes flying in from outside the *Arcadia.* The weapon is poisoned, and in Johnstoun's version, Philisides is offered amputation of the affected leg: "His best relief was to have wanted the whole." However, he refuses, "wishing rather to bee altogether dissolved, than live in part" (1638, bb1r). There seems to be a metafictional element to this passage; continuing the *Arcadia* is repeatedly referred to as "adding a limb," so that the maimed body is a metaphor for the maimed text. Gavin Alexander writes that Johnstoun creates "an equation between the whole and yet partial works and the whole and yet interrupted Sidney: he will not 'live in part' and so dies whole, before his time; his *Arcadia* lives 'in part' but should be viewed as a whole from which something is lacking rather than a fragment." Johnstoun's supplement is "designed to stitch the prosthetic ending from the 'old' *Arcadia* to the body of the 'new'" (2006, 276). I would add that Johnstoun's text itself is the prosthesis, mimicking the main body of the *Arcadia* as closely as possible in order to leave it whole, though it may "want" Sidney himself.

[2.12] For Alexander and Johnstoun, Sidney's death "in the midst" of rewriting the *Arcadia,* represented by them in the middle of the *Arcadia* itself, serves as both a justification and a limit for their project. The fact that the author must be depicted and then killed off in such a way—something that, with the exception of particularly metafictional fandoms, does not have much equivalent in present-day practice—suggests the unusual circumstances in which these supplement writers were working. It is also a departure from their scrupulous adherence to Sidney's plot: in the appended books of the *Old Arcadia,* Philisides reappears alive. Alexander acknowledges this in his endnote:

> [2.13] I have onely heerein conformed my selfe to that which preceeded my beginning, and was knowne to be that admirable Authors owne, but doe differ in some things from that which followes, specially in the death of *Philisides,* making choise of a course, whereby I might best manifest what affection I beare to the memorie of him, whom I tooke to be alluded unto by that name. (1621, Ff5v)

[2.14] He repeats the sentiment later, stating that out of "Love to the Author's Memory," he had been "intending further…to have altered all that followed after my Addition" (Garrett 1996, 199)—presumably rewriting the *Old Arcadia* material to make it a better fit. For Alexander, there was clearly a distinction between the revised material, which "was knowne to be that Admirable Authors owne," and the appended books, which might be altered for the purpose of better honoring Sidney's memory.

[2.15] As Florio had complained, the gap in book 3 called into question the ending that followed it. Although Sanford had stressed the unity of the work, from 1613 onward, the explanatory note was expanded to provide a fuller account of Sidney's working practice. It describes the *New Arcadia* as a collection of "loose sheets" in the process of revision, "without any certain disposition or perfect order":

> [2.16] What conclusion it should haue had, or how far the Work haue bene extended (had it had his last hand thereunto) was onely knowne to his own spirit, where only those admirable Images were (and no where else) to bee cast.
>
> [2.17] And here we are likewise vtterly depriued of the relation how this combat ended [etc.]…all which vnfortunate mayme we must be content to suffer with the rest. (1613, Ee5r)

[2.18] Because Sidney never finished the revision, we cannot know how he might have chosen to end his rewritten work. The "vnfortunate mayme" in book 3, which may be closed by a supplement, is thus not the only incompletion; it opens a space for later writers in its wake, extending to the conclusion of even an "augmented and ended" *Arcadia.*

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3. *A Sixth Booke*

[3.1] The original ending of the *Old Arcadia* served as an abrupt retreat from the eucatastrophe of the plot and an ironic gesture toward Continental romances, with their proliferation of side narratives and progeny. None of the plotlines mentioned is crucial, while the suggestion of writerly boredom adds to the narrator's display of *sprezzatura*:

> [3.2] But the solemnities of these marriages, with the Arcadian pastorals full of many comical adventures…the strange story of the fair queens Artaxia of Persia and Erona of Lydia, with the prince Plangus's wonderful chances…the shepherdish loves of Menalcas

> with Kalodoulus's daughter, and the poor hopes of the poor Philisides, in the pursuit of his affections, the strange continuances of Klaius's and Strephon's desire, lastly the son of Pyrocles named Pyrophilus, and Melidora the fair daughter of Pamela by Musidorus, who even at their birth entered into admirable fortunes, may awake some other spirit to exercise his pen wherewith mine is already dulled. (Robertson 1973, 417)

[3.3] Yet the ending advertised in 1593 alters these lines to include additional characters whose fates are actually central to the revised *Arcadia* but are left unresolved. It thus becomes a real invitation, a suggestion of incompletion at odds with the general happy ending. This left room for some writers to continue beyond the bounds of the romance, providing it with their own conclusions.

[3.4] One of these, Richard Belling's *A Sixth Booke to the Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* (first published in 1624, and included within the folio from 1627), makes its relationship clear in the title: it is not a separate story but the last part of a whole (note 7). A series of commendatory verses in the original Dublin quarto is vital for articulating the text's connection to the *Arcadia,* stressing Belling's imitation of Sidney as well as his Irish national identity. Because these poems are intended to advertise the work, they reveal a great deal about how Belling's contemporaries perceived a successful continuation.

[3.5] Several of the commendators praise the similarities between Belling and Sidney in both "matter" (that is, continuing the story of Arcadia) and style. W. Martyn writes that "surely both being gone / Next age will write your characters in one" (1624, A3r), with Sidney and Belling merging into each other. Another poem similarly elides the differences between their authorship:

> [3.6] Thus much Ile say, That if this age were blest
> Againe by him, whose soule is now at rest,
> The ne're enough admired Sidney, and
> He to thy Booke would but vouch safe his hand,
> Thou hast therein such wittie smoothnesse showne,
> Is out of doubt it would be thought his owne. (A4v)

[3.7] Only handwriting separates Belling from the original, yet even when praising their equality, Sidney still emerges the clear superior: he has only to rise from the grave to take credit for Belling's work. Martyn actually

imagines him doing so, so that the text becomes a scene of haunting: "I read thy booke on[e] night late, and did feare / Still as I read, I saw appearing there / Sir Philip Sidney's ghost" (1624, A3r).

[3.8] Authors were frequently imagined as living on through their texts, which could confer a kind of "print-made immortality" (Eisenstein 1979, 121). For the continuation writers, however, there is a fine balance between raising Sidney from the dead and carving out their own territory. The metaphor of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul, is frequently used in commendatory verses to describe Sidney's spirit infusing his continuator. Yet Belling himself does not accept this metaphor: if his writing is such a good imitation, it is through Belling's own labor rather than passive possession by Sidney. Belling's purpose, as he insists in his preface, is far from literary forgery:

> [3.9] Yet let no man judge wrongfully of my endeavours: I have added a limme to *Apelles* picture; but my minde never entertain'd such vaine hopes, to thinke it of perfection sufficient to delude the eyes of the most vulgar, with the likenesse in the workmanship. No, no, I doe not follow *Pythagoras* his opinion of transmigrations: I am well assur'd divine *Sidney's* soule is not infus'd into me, whose Iudgment was only able to finish, what his Invention was only worthy to undertake. (1624, A3r)

[3.10] Where the commendators join Belling and Sidney, Belling separates them out again and emphasizes the gulf between them. Despite the humility of tone, this serves to transfer primary agency for the *Sixth Booke* from Sidney back to Belling himself; as he notes, "To strive to lessen the greatnesse of the attempt, were to take away the glorie of the action" (1624, A3r). One of the commendatory verses picks up on this phrase, showing how the reputation of Belling's work is inseparable from its relationship to Sidney:

> [3.11] 'Tis true, th'attempt was great; nor blame I that,
> Since greatest actions left as patternes bee
> For imitation, which t'have offer'd at
> So well as thou hast done, will honour thee.
> And if thy Booke misse of the due applause,
> Th'unimmitable president's the cause. (1624, A2v)

[3.12] This encapsulates the contradictions inherent in ideas of literary imitation: Sidney is praised both for leaving a pattern for followers and for

being "unimmitable." For a continuation writer, Sidney's renown is a double-edged sword—it is an honor to approximate him, yet one also risks being overshadowed by him.

[3.13] The risk is potentially greater for Belling because of his nationality. Although in the London folios Belling is described as "R.B. of Lincolnes Inne, Esq.," his work—particularly the 1624 quarto—has much stronger associations with his native Ireland than with the Inns of Court (note 8). It seems no coincidence that the quarto followed soon after the Dublin publication of the *Arcadia* of 1621; as with the 1599 Edinburgh edition, the dissemination of Sidney's romance seems to have inspired local continuators. The commendatory poems credit Belling with a renewal of Ireland's ancient literary reputation, damaged in the recent colonial upheavals (1624, A3v). Moreover, the derivative nature of his work is negated in some measure by Belling's nationality. Speaking into a "high silence" of national literature, he can be both a renewer of the "old learning" and a generic pioneer:

> [3.14] Thou art the first who with thy well-tun'd reed
> Awak'd thy countries Muse, and led thereby
> Into the pleasant fields of Arcady
> Her flockes, her Pastors, and the sportfull crue
> Of all her youth that shall thy steps pursue. (1624, A3v–A4r)

[3.15] The metaphor of following footsteps, which Belling (quoting the *Thebaid*) uses at the conclusion of his work to describe his relation to Sidney is here transferred to Belling himself as the initiator of an Irish romance tradition (1624, 100). Given Sidney's major role in English letters, Belling's *Sixth Booke* represents an Irish appropriation of his text as a symbol of national equality. Significantly, the only paratext retained for the London folio is Belling's modest preface, in which he admits,"That he should undergo that burden, whose mother tongue differs as much from this language, as Irish from English; augments the danger of the enterprise, and gives your expectation perhaps an assurance what the event must be" (1624, A3r). The national difference becomes representative of the stylistic distance between himself and Sidney, but at the same time, this distance "augments" both "the danger" and the potential glory.

[3.16] In completing the *Arcadia,* Belling takes the threads listed in its final lines as a program: like the supplements, his *Sixth Booke* is characterized by a narrative economy that drives all the plotlines toward closure in either marriage or death (note 9). The endings nest inside each

other, all in about 25,000 words: the story of Amphialus and Helen is concluded during a tournament for the princes' double wedding; while narrating his adventures, Amphialus relates the fates of Plangus, Erona, and Artaxia; and a final pastoral interlude mentions Kalodulus's daughter, Strephon, and Klaius. At times, even the characters are disbelieving that things could be so simple, that "*Apollo* would leave so plaine a way for us to track out the footsteps of his obscure misteries" (1624, E1r). The twin urges of the narrative are summed up when Basilius tells Helen, "The sweetly delivered strangenesse of the storie, would still ravish the hearers with a desire of a further cause of attentivenesse, did not a greater desire in us vvho know your vertues, hasten to heare the end of your much pittied distresse"; the haste wins out (1624, G3v). The only digression involves Amphialus's retrospective narration of his misfortunes (which does introduce new characters), but this is necessary to motivate his change of heart regarding Helen: "These former accidents, most deare Lady…made me reflect upon my ungratefull selfe, & consider how cruell I had beene to you" (1624, K4v). In modeling the events of his story so closely on Sidney's, Belling creates a circular momentum that prevents the spiraling outward of narrative, ending instead with recapitulation and equilibrium. The final lines describe all the major characters departing from Arcadia, "leaving *Basilius* and *Gynecia,* when they had accompanied them to the frontiers of *Arcadia,* to the happie quiet of their after life" (1624, O2r). The borders of Arcadia here become the border at which the reader is forced to stop. Instead of following the newlyweds to possible new adventures, we are left with characters to whom nothing more will happen.

4. "This inspired Minerva"

[4.1] Belling's work is *A Sixth Booke;* it is the only book of the *Arcadia* to lack the definite article. In fact, another conclusion for the story was published in 1651, though it was never included within the *Arcadia* folio. This small octavo volume is titled *A Continuation of Sir Philip Sydney's Arcadia…written by a young gentlewoman, Mris A.W.* (Anna Weamys), and its preliminaries continue to stress the twin facts of the author's youth and gender.

[4.2] In fact, several of the continuation writers (including Alexander, Belling, and the author of the *Historie*) emphasize their youth at the time of composition. In his preface, Belling states, "To add to Sir *Philip Sidney,* I know is rashnesse; a fault pardonable in me, if custome might as well excuse the offence, as youth may prescribe in offending in this kinde" (1624,

A3r). Today, fan fiction is often spoken of as a training-wheels stage in a writer's development, easier because it does not require the creation of a setting and characters. It is tempting to see the same sentiment being expressed in the 17th century, but Belling's "kinde" of offense may also comprise writing a romance, a genre frequently denigrated by association with women and the young. Sidney himself described the *Arcadia* as the product of "a young head, not so wel staied as I would it were" (1593, ¶3v). In any case, the antecedent for Belling's "fault" is clearly "rashnesse"'—approaching such an inimitable text demonstrates youthful, reckless courage, rather than the timidity of a fledgling author.

[4.3] Being a woman was potentially a greater disadvantage for a continuator. Despite the links between women and romance, 17th-century conduct books discouraged women from reading such texts, let alone writing them. The prefatory matter for Weamys's *Continuation* has attracted critics' attention for the unusually positive picture of female authorship painted therein, symbolized by F. Vaughan's call in the final commendatory poem to "Lay by your Needles Ladies, take the Pen, / The onely difference 'twixt you and Men" (1651, ¶7v). Still, women's authorship is not a given but, like the idea of continuing Sidney's *Arcadia,* a problem for Weamys's commendators to address and resolve.

[4.4] Although one poet advises the reader to "[view] the Virgin there, and here the Art" (1651, ¶6r), Weamys's status as a woman—her appeal as a young woman writing in an eroticized genre—is an inescapable part of her authorship. The publisher takes particular care to present both her "person and style" to the gaze of a male reader:

> [4.5] Lo here Pigmalion's breathing statue, Sir Philip's fantasie incarnate: both Pamela's Majestie, and Philoclea's Humilitie exprest to the life, in the person and style of this Virago. In brief, no other than the lively Ghost of Sydney, by a happie transmigration speaks through the organs of this inspired Minerva. If any Critical ear, disrealish the shrilness of the Note; let it be tuned to Apollo's Lyre, and the harmonie will soon be perceived to be much better; and the Ladie appear much more delightfull to her Musidorus. (1651, ¶4r–v)

[4.6] Weamys embodies Sidney's characters as well as portraying them: she is Galatea, given life by a man's art, and conveying his voice imperfectly through her shrill "organs." Meanwhile, Sidney is praised for the ability of his "prophetical spirit" to predict—even create—the existence of Weamys

herself. The idea of transmigration, rejected by Belling, is repeatedly invoked to transfer agency for the *Continuation* to Sidney—that is, "If a Male Soul, by Transmigration, can / Pass to a Female, and Her spirits Man" (1651, ¶8r). Another writer sees Sidney defying death "with a timely Metempsychosis":

> [4.7] He breathes through female Organs, yet retains
> His masculine vigour in Heroick strains.
> Who hears't may some brave Amazon seem to be,
> Not Mars but Mercury's Champion, Zelmane.
> And well he may: for doubtless such is she,
> Perfection gives t' Arcadia's Geographie. (1651, ¶6v)

[4.8] Weamys's femininity is complicated by her role as a manlike "Virago" receiving inspiration from the undoubtedly masculine Sidney, and by the phallic contradiction of her "Feminine Pen" (1651, ¶4r). Fortunately, Sidney's own text provides a model for this transgressive mixture of male and female —not Pamela or Philoclea, but the "brave Amazon" Zelmane, actually the prince Pyrocles in disguise. Sidney's reincarnation in Weamys thus echoes this kind of heroic cross-dressing.

[4.9] The rest of this poem, however, muddies the agency behind both texts still further: "Arcadia thus henceforth disputed is, / Whether Sir Philip's or the Countesses." Weamys's continuation is elided with Mary Sidney's work on the 1593 edition. Their efforts are linked because they are both women, each reciprocally authorizing the other. Moreover, like the countess's editing, Weamys's project is necessitated by the need to finish the *Arcadia,* to give "perfection" to its "Geographie." One poem, which describes the project of continuation using heavily gendered terms, promises that Weamys

> [4.10] Handsomly will set
> An end to what great *Sydney* did beget,
> But never perfected, these Embryons she
> Doth Mid wife forth in full maturitie.
> Nor is't, where things are left undone, a sin,
> To seek to end what greater ones begin. (1651, ¶5v)

[4.11] Like the countess, Weamys serves as midwife (though not mother) to the unfinished textual embryo begot by Sidney. The last two lines spell out what other continuations only imply: it is the *Arcadia*'s gaps that prevent their work from being a transgressive "sin." The poem's conclusion, moreover, points to the essential distinction between Sidney and Weamys

as the only judgment that can ultimately be made about their works. Critics should "not with a Frown compare them, but a Smile": "Then this of both, let nothing else be said, / This *Sydney's* self did write, but this a *Maid*" (1651, ¶5v).

[4.12] The narrative voice in this maid's *Continuation* is at once assertive and deferential. In her dedication, she praises "the Learned *Sidney*" and writes that her "ambition was not raised to so high a pitch, as the Title now manifests it to be, until I received Commands from those that cannot be disobeyed"—perhaps her father or her aristocratic dedicatees (1651, ¶3v). Much of her narrative overlaps with Sidney's, and at one point she refers the reader directly to him, as Belling does at the start of his work: "And after many strange accidents had apparently been discovered, as the famous Sir *Philip Sydney* fully declares, *Pyrocles* and *Musidorus* were found to be alive" (1651, D5v). Throughout the text, Weamys repeatedly mentions her own inability to describe the events she is relating: not only martial interludes (as when Plangus and Plexirtus "entered they into so fierce a fight, that it goes beyond my memorie to declare all the passages thereof," G4v), but also moments of heightened emotion: "*Helena's* joy at the hearing of this news, was too great for my dull expression" (1651, C6r). These may seem like insecure disclaimers, but the reminders of Weamys's authorial identity actually allow her firmer control over the plot, picking up and dropping the various threads and speeding them toward a resolution. It prevents the endless proliferation of narrative that would "make two large a storie" (1651, H1v). Like Belling, Weamys is interested in swiftly arranging her characters' marriages, who are advised to "Finish therefore the knot, that no crosses or calamities can unfinish, without further deferrings" (1651, H2v–H3r). Marriage is a force of conclusion, a bulwark against further "crosses or calamities." A quadruple—and after the resolution of the Urania plot, quintuple—wedding finishes the story. This is followed by the spontaneous deaths of those (Klaius and Philisides) who have no one to marry, so that their plotlines may also come to a stop. Weamys, like Belling, ends with a general dispersal from Arcadia:

> [4.13] Then after all Ceremonies accomplished, they retired severally to their flourishing Kingdoms…where they…were fruitfull in their renowned Families. And when they had sufficiently participated of the pleasures of this world, they resigned their Crowns to their lawfull Successours, and ended their days in Peace and Quietness. (1651, N4r)

[4.14] Her ending, however, is even more conclusive than Belling's: she collapses the life span between marriage and death, denying the possibility of further adventures. Because none of the second generation is named, it exists only to emphasize the smoothness of the succession and does not suggest any narrative potential. "Ended their days in Peace and Quietness" is an unquestionably final line.

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5. The *Arcadia* "quite metamorphosed"

[5.1] A very different take on the *Arcadia,* written around the same time as Weamys's *Continuation,* demonstrates the historical circumstances denied by Weamys's tidy conclusion. An undated anonymous manuscript, currently held in the Beinecke Library, is titled *The Historie of Arcadia, or an Addition to and a Continuance Of Sir Phillip Sydney's ARCADIA* (note 10). This obscure text was never printed, probably owing to its explicit political content. In a preface, the author apologizes for it as the fruit of his "greene studies," which

> [5.2] should not have had so earely a springe, if I had not bene incited thereto, by the Author, of the Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia; who in the close of his History, doth seeme to invite some other, to the continuance of relatinge those occurrences, which his greater employments did abridge him of time, to consummate: to fulfil therefore, in some parte, his desire, I have adventured to proceed in the relation…hoping that this my slender fabricke, may stand the more firmely, because the foundation of it was layed, by so excellente an Artificer. (1)

[5.3] This author takes the ending of the *Arcadia* as a direct invitation, as well as a sign of incompletion due to Sidney's other "employments"; he thus seems to write at Sidney's own incitement, basing his work firmly upon Arcadian foundations.

[5.4] Indeed, the *Historie* begins in the recognizable form of a sixth-book continuation, "consummat[ing]" the *Arcadia*'s various loose threads. Its author attentively recalls the details of Sidney's plot and is a good mimic of his prose, even if this is mainly through (as Johnstoun had put it) using "language…borrowed from himself." By the end of its first section, however (book 6 out of a total 9), the story has taken a very different turn. As the writer acknowledges in his preface, he has not confined himself to concluding the plotlines left open in invitation by Sidney:

> [5.5] The bounds of whose desire I have presumed to passe, since the various…transactions of the Arcadian state, were, after the decease of King Basileus, quite metamorphosed, from amorous expressions and…pastoral enterludes; into serene counsells and politicke consultations, which afterwards produced both forraine and domestike actions…which harsh subiect, I hope, may…in some measure, render my imperfect sentences, and rough style excusable; as I doubt not, but your candour, will make a favourable construction of my presumption, in transgressinge Sr Phillip Sidney's desire. (1)

[5.6] Somewhat disingenuously, the writer attributes the changing genre of his work to the subsequent "transactions of the Arcadian state," as if he were relating the history of real events.

[5.7] In some measure, of course, this is exactly what he is doing, as the affairs of Arcadia are "metamorphosed" into a direct allegory for English history. Pamela's father, husband, and daughter are all killed off at the end of book 6, for example, so that she can take the throne as an analogue for Queen Elizabeth. By book 9, the plot and characters of the *Arcadia* have been left behind entirely, in favor of detailed description of the civil wars fought by Pamela's grandson, Aristanax (Charles I), ending with an account of his execution. Each book covers a single reign, but this final catastrophe interrupts the succession "by the end both of the king, and kingdome of Arcadia wherewith this my history also, of Arcadia shall have an end" (255). The *Historie* ends with a rupture, like the *Arcadia* itself, but here it is the king's death rather than the author's that puts a period to the story: "For this author at any rate, Arcadia's existence *as Arcadia* is totally dependent on its monarchical form of government…Not only the kingdom but the genre itself is thus destroyed by the king's execution" (Potter 1989, 94). Allegorical readings of the *Arcadia* were common in this period, as Sidney's work was reinterpreted in light of the new political romances, and royalists used the genre as a way of understanding their situation (note 11). However, the *Historie*'s author is aware that he is "transgressinge Sr Phillip Sidney's desire" through this radical extension of his story. This is the only continuation to constitute such a departure from the source, a contrast to the conformism of the texts already discussed, and perhaps a sign of the historical stresses motivating its composition. Instead of fixing the gaps in the *Arcadia,* this author uses Sidney's text as a jumping-off point to address his own contemporary concerns under an increasingly thin veil of romance. In fact, the *Historie* seems to have been read (so far as the manuscript was

read at all) more for its historical content than as a sequel. The back pages include two attempts to decode the names and places mentioned, and eighteenth-century notes on the flyleaf describe it only as "an Allegorical History of the Grand Rebellion begun 1640."

6. Markham's intolerable allusion

[6.1] Apart from this somewhat anomalous text, the most extensive of the *Arcadia* continuations (and the first chronologically) was written by Gervase Markham, an author better known for his extensive nonfiction works. Ben Jonson once observed that "Markham (who added his *English Arcadia*) was not of the number of the faithful, i.e. poets, and but a base fellow" (1988, 465), and many modern commentators have also dismissed him as a prolific hack. In the 1590s, however, Markham was associated with the Earl of Essex, who had close ties to Sidney; he had married Sidney's widow, and his sister, Penelope Rich, was known to be the Stella of Sidney's sonnets. An *Arcadia* continuation might therefore have been designed by Markham to please Essex and his associates. The preface states, in standard dedicatory terms, that "the name and methode [were] neither of mine election…For that power which did (and there was great reason it euer should to do) gouerne all the powers within mee, by a forcible commandement bound mee to doe what is done" (1613, A3v).

[6.2] By the time Markham's *English Arcadia* was published, however—the first part in 1607, the second in 1613—Essex had been executed after his ill-fated rebellion, and Penelope Rich had died. The first volume was entered in the Stationers' Register as "*the Countesse of BEDFORDes Arcadia* | *begynninge where the Countesse of PEMBROOKEs endes*" (Arber 1876, 133). The Countess of Bedford was seen as a successor to Mary Sidney's literary patronage, and Markham was related to her by marriage, but for whatever reason, the dedication fell through. Markham's work appeared without an aristocratic patron, and he was called upon to volubly defend it in prefaces attached to each of the two parts. Markham writes that he had "aduentured to cast into the world this Orphan, which how-euer it was once begot by noble parents…is now like a vagabond inforst to begge, and liue vpon miserable charitie" (1607, A4r). He later claims that his lack of dedication has made critics more harsh in judging his work.

[6.3] The criticisms Markham faces are specifically related to his "arrogancie immitation, affectation, and euen absurd ignorance" in continuing the *Arcadia* (1607, A2r). His "crimes" are in the shadowy area of

literary property, and the prefaces are remarkable for how directly they address this. First, he defends his choice of title, protesting that "thogh it be only excellent in [Sidney], yet hath it likewise beene vsed by others… without either pride or ostentation, men taking libertie to lay their hystories in Countries by them most affected" (1607, A2r). This mixing of terms demonstrates the multiple meanings of "Arcadia" in this period as the title and setting of Sidney's renowned work; a pastoral realm inherited from classical writers; and an actual part of ancient Greece, and thus open to anyone as a setting for their "hystories." Markham is right in stating that multiple other titles that include the word *Arcadia* had been published, before and after Sidney, and he sees no reason why his cannot be one of them.

[6.4] However, Markham is not simply setting his work in a region of Greece; he is, as the title page proclaims, "Alluding his beginning from Sir *Philip Sydneys* ending." Thus, he goes on to offer further justification for his project:

> [6.5] Next for mine allusion and imitation, which beareth a colour of much greater vain-glorie: mine excuse must onely bee the worthinesse of former presidents, as Virgill from Homer, Ariosto from Baiardo, famous Spencer from renowned Chaucer, and I with as good priuiledge, from the onely to be admired Sir Philip Sydney…who were our age but blest with his liuing breath, he would himselfe confesse the honie hee drew both from Heliodorus, and Diana. (1607, A2r–A2v)

[6.6] As many defenders of fan fiction still do, Markham situates himself within a long tradition of imitation, including ancient and modern, and foreign and English examples. In fact, he comes close to suggesting that there is no such thing as originality in literature, only a continuous sequence of borrowing. Sidney himself is raised from the dead to admit his sources: "Markham wants to see Sidney not as an unapproachable monument, self-created and inimitable, but as a writer among writers, taking his place in a continuum of reading and writing and encouraging Markham to do the same" (Alexander 2006, 271).

[6.7] This argument was evidently controversial, because in his second preface (after another defence of the title), Markham takes it up again:

> [6.8] Another sayes, the alusion is not tollerable; as if pooremen should not borrow from the rich, or that vertue should euer liue so

> alone, that no man should dare to bee her imitator. Nay, saies a third, the great high-treason of all, is to make Noble Sir Phillip Sidney acquainted, either with Diana, or else Heliodorus, as if the excellency of his minde had disdained that which first brought it to perfection (Iudiciall reading) o no, were he on the earth, he would…tell them, that his contemplatiue labour first brought him to actiue worthinesse. (1613, A4r—A4v)

[6.9] Adopting Sidney's own voice, Markham once more denies the possibility of a great original work that does not arise from previous sources. His view of the literary world is densely intertextual, though not devoid of hierarchies and notions of literary property. In an extension of humanist educational precepts, reading and writing are equated with the contemplative and active lives, so that the act of writing an imitative work becomes equivalent to the imitation of virtue advocated in Sidney's "Defence of Poesie" (1595).

[6.10] Unlike the other sequels discussed earlier (with the exception of the *Historie*), Markham's *English Arcadia* is a generational continuation: it concerns the fates of Pyrophilus and Melidora, the children named in the last lines of Sidney's *Arcadia.* Markham begins with an imitation of Sidney that amplifies his elaborate rhetorical style, rendering it almost unreadable with flourishes, and this has probably accounted for the low reputation of his work. However, as the story continues, the borrowings from Sidney become less fundamental. Markham is "Alluding his beginning from Sir *Philip Sydneys* ending," not writing a sixth book to the *Arcadia,* and he does not display the other continuators' strong impulse toward closure and narrative economy. The second volume of the *English Arcadia* (1613) is only "*The end of the first Booke,*" although—whether through lack of patronage or continuing criticism —no more of this "Work in Progress" was ever published.

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7. Conclusions

[7.1] The fact that the *Arcadia* continuations were composed by two Scotsmen, an Irishman, a woman, a defeated royalist, and a "hack" writer like Markham demonstrates the broad popularity of Sidney's romance and the different points of view that were brought to bear upon it. It would be an exaggeration, however, to conclude that continuations were a specifically subaltern genre in this period, or to interpret these writers' works (as some critics have done) exclusively in light of their biographies. On the other hand, these different subject positions certainly affected how their

relationship to Sidney, the quintessential English poet-knight, was framed and defined.

[7.2] It is difficult to say whether these readers saw themselves as part of a fandom in the same way we do today. Vera Keller (2011) recently explored the idea of the lover or amateur as fan in early modern culture within a slightly different context. For literary fandoms, the study of historical readership relies on scanty evidence: library inventories, chance remarks in diaries, and readers' annotations in their books. The many editions and surviving copies of the *Arcadia*—over 400 in the English Short Title Catalogue—certainly show that this was a valuable and well-loved text. Seventeenth-century conduct manuals cautioned women against reading it lest it encourage amorous thoughts, and one of them draws an explicit link between reading and writing: "Instead of reading Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia,* let them learn the grounds of good huswifery. I like not the female Poetess at any hand" (Hackett 2000, 10). In their surveys of annotations in *Arcadia* copies, Peter Lindenbaum (1997) and Heidi Brayman Hackel (2005) demonstrate that readers were not only combing through it for moral *sententia* and quotable descriptions, but also engaging with the plot, a type of reading that Lindenbaum (somewhat teleologically) describes as "proto-novelistic" (1997, 89). The *Arcadia* continuations and their paratexts are thus particularly important in showing the actions such reader responses might lead to: as Johnstoun writes, "I was carried with such pleasure in perusing the same, that I could never find an end of reading" (1638, aa1r).

[7.3] The resulting continuations all use techniques familiar to readers of fan fiction—for example, they rely on memories of past events in order to situate themselves within the continuity of the *Arcadia,* and they highlight the characters' most prominent attributes (Pamela's dignity, Philoclea's humility, Anaxius's pride) to make them appear consistent. Of course, this does not protect them from later accusations of being out of character: one critic, for example, complains that the heroines are "'transmigrated' almost unrecognizably" in Weamys's hands, so that "the reader is disturbed to see" it (Salzman 1985, 131). In a passage that demonstrates the affective power of characterization, A. D. G. Wiles claims that Helen and Amphialus in the *English Arcadia* "do not even vaguely resemble Sidney's characters"; he indignantly concludes, "Markham has profaned these noble characters; and what is worse, he suddenly breaks off his account of them, leaving these evil implications upon them" (1933, 124–25).

[7.4] We cannot know whether 17th-century readers would have shared

these criticisms. Unfortunately, apart from commendatory verses and prefaces, there is little evidence for the continuations' contemporary reception. There was certainly no legal impediment to their publication; although the *Arcadia*'s publisher once prosecuted a piracy of the text, there was no equivalent action involving a continuation, and in fact many of them came to be included within the folio (note 12). The 1638 edition of the *Arcadia* contained not only Sidney's works, but the two supplements by Alexander and Johnstoun, as well as Belling's *Sixth Booke,* all advertised as additions for the benefit of the reader (note 13).

[7.5] On the other hand, as I have shown, all of these texts do include some paratextual explanation or apology for their project in continuing the *Arcadia.* Clearly such appropriation was not merely a given of this literary culture. Just as present-day fan fiction disclaimers, with their focus on legal ownership and possible litigation ("Don't own; don't sue"), say something about our attitudes toward literary property, these statements shed light on early 17th-century views about authorship and originality. They also demonstrate the enduring appeal of textual gaps for readers wishing to know what would happen next within the world Sidney had created. Although it is hard to say whether Weamys or Markham would have felt any kinship with the two *Arcadia* stories currently housed in the fan fiction Archive of Our Own (http://archiveofourown.org/), I believe that these texts reveal an unbroken tradition of a specific type of engagement with literature, to which we have only recently given a name.

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8. Notes

1. In providing a history of what she calls archontic literature, Abigail Derecho gestures toward the *Arcadia* material (particularly Weamys's *Continuation* and Mary Wroth's 1621 *Urania,* which is not technically a sequel) for the beginning of fan fiction as a strategy for "subordinated groups seeking adequate means of expression" (2006, 67). However, her analysis is necessarily quite brief and general, collapsing the distinction between various forms of intertextuality.

2. This was particularly true of Continental romance cycles (like *Palmerin* or *Amadis de Gaule*), which might include a dozen volumes written over more a century by various authors. Although such works lie outside my scope here, they also provide an important fan fiction precedent.

3. Pender (2011) explores Mary Sidney's important role in the creation of

Sidney as an author. For more on the *Arcadia*'s composition and publication history, see Woudhuysen (1966), Alexander (2006), and Skretkowicz (1986, 1987). A full checklist of the *Arcadia* editions I discuss can be found in Juel-Jensen (1987).

4. For the complex publication history of this text, see Wiles (1956) and Mitchell and Foster (1969). Coincidentally, 1621 was also the year of Mary Sidney's death, although her attitude toward Alexander's supplement is unknown.

5. With its dedication to James VI/I, addressing him only as king of Scotland, Johnstoun's supplement was probably written long before its publication—possibly following the 1599 Edinburgh edition of the *Arcadia.* Johnstoun's supplement is relegated to the back of the volume rather than included within the text like Alexander's, whether because of Alexander's priority or his higher social rank.

6. Anna Weamys's *Continuation* also depicts the death of Philisides on its last pages, this time in his pastoral guise as a melancholy shepherd who dies for love, refusing to name his beloved. The refusal may be an acknowledgment of the historical distance between Weamys's *Continuation* and the original text, so that a biographical note in the 1655 edition of the *Arcadia* states, "I dare confidently averr that the wards of this lock are grown so rustie with time, that a modern key will scarce unlock it" (1655, b3v). It is also possible that Weamys did not recognize Philisides as Sidney, though the placement of his death at the conclusion of her work seems significant. See Cullen (1994, liv–lv).

7. This author is also called Bellings or Belings; I use the spelling in the Dublin quarto.

8. In later life, Belling would become a prominent politician and historian of the Irish Confederation; see his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

9. He avoids only Philisides, probably because he is following an edition that includes Alexander's supplement, and the next-generation stories of Pyrophilus and Melidora.

10. On the basis of the interest in and knowledge of military campaigns, I believe the *Historie* was probably written by a male royalist; I therefore refer to the author as "he."

11. Charles I was famously supposed to have recited Pamela's prayer from the *Arcadia* on the eve of his execution, which led to an extended attack by John Milton in *Eikonoklastes* (1649). This incident is discussed by Dobranski (2005) and Magnus (1991). For political readings of the *Arcadia,* see Patterson (1984).

12. On the Edinburgh piracy of the *Arcadia* and the resulting law case, see Plomer (1899) and Judge (1934, 101–10).

13. No more continuations were included after 1638—whether because the *Arcadia*'s popularity was on the wane or because all the gaps were seen as sufficiently filled. By the time the 1655 edition was published, its editors wanted additions that would explicate the 75-year-old text rather than continue it.

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